1005150691

PRINTER'S INK
July 5, 1963

EDITORIAL PAGE

Dangerous nonsense dept.

Like The King Who Had No Clothes, members of tobacco groups continue to hide behind an archaic, outmoded idea in continuing to promote confusion over the effects of tobacco on the lungs and the heart.

Last week, Edward F. Ragland, vice-president of the Tobacco Institute Inc., promoted even more confusion. He declared, "The theory about cigarette smoking and health has been repeated so often that many have forgotten it is still just a theory, lacking clinical and laboratory verification . . . .

"Theories about tobacco still rest chiefly on statistical association studies, and there are some noted statisticians who question the meaning of the statistics." He quoted Dr. Joseph Berkson, head of medical statistics at the Mayo Clinic, who said, "Statistical studies 'must be confirmed by experimental studies and other different types of investigation. And this has not happened'."

How true—and what nonsense.

This is what we mean. Medicine is clinically oriented. Unless something is proved in the laboratory, it doesn't exist as far as doctors are concerned. In the case of drugs, or surgical techniques, and so on, this may be true. This insistance on clinical proof has saved, will save, many lives. But it is also perhaps the biggest single factor in holding up the progress—the real progress—of medicine (and new-product development everywhere, we might add). This clinical orientation has prevented medicine from putting to work the vast reaches of the behavioral sciences in gathering and assessing information. It has prevented medicine from making use of factor analysis in deciding upon, and speeding up the application of, new techniques.

Statistical correlations, looked at creatively and without built-in prejudices, could give medicine years-long, even decades-long, head starts on preventive programs, treatments, attitudes and so on, over their turtle-like progress that moves from clinical experiment to clinical experiment.

The statistical correlations in tobacco and lung cancer, tobacco and heart disease, are so strong and conclusive that such groups as the American Heart Assn. have come out with historic pronouncements on smoking and its effects.

Yet the American Medical Assn., the Tobacco Institute and Tobacco Industry Research Council continue to hide behind their clinically oriented attitudes toward statistical correlations to defend their deliberate efforts to confuse people about the effects of smoking.

It would be advisable for tobacco manufacturers, and for their advertising agencies, and for media that depend so much on tobacco advertising, to stop dreaming. What happened to the cranberry industry is peanuts, to mix our cupboard for a moment, to what can happen to the tobacco industry.

We don't want any industry, and its advertising men, hurt. But it is our feeling that fewer people will be hurt, fewer advertising and marketing and media people will be dislocated, if there's an end to kidding around. What's needed is some frank, candid planning to anticipate and cope with what's going to happen.

NATIONAL OBSERVER
July 29, 1963

☆ ☆ ☆

Smoking And Common Sense

THE FOCAL POINT of the cigaret controversy has shifted. The issue no longer is whether cigaret smoking is harmful to health; it is. The question now is what to do about it.

No one familiar with the accumulated findings can reasonably doubt today that there is an intimate connection between heavy smoking and lung cancer. Smoking's role in other lung and heart ailments is equally certain. And yet, smokers continue to puff away at an astonishing rate; Americans last year bought some 500 billion cigarets, 100 billion more than a decade ago. About half the adult population has the habit.

Now, California health officials are anxious to try some things to discourage cigaret smoking — heavier taxes on cigarets to make them more costly, clinics for smokers who want to quit, closer supervision of cigaret vending machines, stricter control of cigaret sales. What the officials are proposing, in short, is to use the powers of the state to protect smokers from themselves.

It's a hopeless task. A man who wants to smoke will find a cigaret, and all the schemes afoot will never make up for a lack of common sense.

1005150691A

Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/pyyk0000